HAPPY THANKSGIVING

A Little History

A Couple of Facts

And Some Safety

How the Turkey Got Its Name

Some believe Christopher Columbus thought that the land he discovered was connected to India, and when he discovered a new type of peacock (the turkey). He therefore called it 'tuka,' which is 'peacock' in Tamil, a dialect from India.

A Native American name for turkey is 'firkee'; some say this is how turkeys got their name. Simple facts, however, sometimes produce the best answers—when a turkey is scared, it makes a "turk, turk, turk" noise.

Turkey: The National Bird?

Ben Franklin thought the North American wild turkey should be our national bird. Of course, the turkey of his day was nothing like the domesticated descendants we know today. The wild turkey of Ben Franklin's day was a brightly plumed, cunning bird of flight.

Franklin wrote that the Bald Eagle was a bird of bad moral character because they do not earn their living honestly. He often saw Bald Eagles perched on trees near the river. They would wait for other birds to catch fish and then they would steal the fish from the other birds.

Hey, You Turkey!

During the 1970s, a popular slang expression was to call a person doing a stupid thing, a “Turkey." Being called a turkey was not a compliment, in fact, it meant you were incompetent. The comparison was to the domestic turkey that has been bred into a condition of profound stupidity.

The Turkey Trot

In England, during the 1700s, turkeys were walked to market in large flocks. Turkey farmers often covered the birds' feet with little booties to protect them on the long journey to the London market.

The “Turkey Trot" was a dance made popular in the early 1900’s. Conservative members of society thought the dance was demoralizing and tried to get it banned at public functions, which only served to increase it’s popularity. The turkey trot was not a graceful dance, as couples danced around in circles bobbing their heads like strutting tom turkeys.

Common Turkey Cooking Mistakes

- **Buying fresh turkeys too early**
  - You should not buy a fresh turkey no earlier than two days before you plan on cooking it.
- **Cross contamination**
  - Kitchen surfaces, utensils, and other food can become contaminated by raw or cooked meat.
- **Thawing a frozen bird at room temperature**
  - This is unsafe because you can end up with a turkey that has bacteria growing on its surface. Use the refrigerator method based on so many hours per pound or you can soak it in cold water (change the water every 30 minutes) or if it will fit in the microwave you can try to defrost it in there.

Common Cooking Mistakes Cont.

- **Partial cooking or pre-stuffing the night before**
  - Do not partially cook the turkey because interrupted cooking may increase bacterial growth. Do not pre-stuff it either because that also can create a hotbed for organisms to multiply.
- **Overstuffing the turkey**
  - You'll either wind up with undercooked stuffing or an overcooked bird because you'll have to cook beyond the cooking time for the stuffing to reach a safe temperature.

Turkey Cooking Tips

- **Promptly refrigerate leftovers**
  - Place food that has been left out at room temperature in the refrigerator after two hours.
- **Don’t leave it in the refrigerator for too long**
  - Gravy and stuffing should not be kept longer than two days. Turkey and other side dishes may be okay for up to four
- **Divide the turkey**
  - It is a good idea to not place an entire cooked turkey in the refrigerator. It is better to divide it up into smaller portions that fit in individual containers

Deep Fried Turkey Safety Tips

- To find out how much oil to use, place the turkey in the pot and then fill it with water. Pull turkey out, mark waterline, drain water & fill with oil.
- Never fry a turkey indoors or in a garage or other structure attached to a building.
- Never fry on wood decks, which could catch fire.
- Never leave the hot oil unattended, and don't allow children or pets near the cooking area.
- Make sure the oil is completely cooled before disposing or storing

Lastly, a Tip on Knife Safety

Due to a recent trend in lacerations to the hands, this safety message would not be complete without a word on knife safety.

- Use the appropriate knife for the task i.e. (If you are peeling potatoes a paring knife works better than a butcher knife).
- Cut items on a cutting board, plate/platter, or in the pan.
- Keep your knives in good condition and sharp.
- When using razor knives during projects, only expose enough of the blade to cut through the material you are trying to cut and if at all possible cut away from your body.

Have a Great Thanksgiving and Stay Safe.